

Chapter 8: Coordination

Intent of Coordination

The intent of coordination in the context of the Inyo-Mono IRWM planning effort is to ensure the following:

- The RWMG coordinates and integrates its activities with local agencies and stakeholders to avoid conflict within the region and to best utilize resources;
- The RWMG is aware of adjacent planning efforts and is coordinating with adjacent RWMGs; and
- The RWMG is aware of State, federal, and local agency regulations, resources, and roles pertaining to the implementation of the IRWM Plan and individual projects.

The Inyo-Mono RWMG has made a concerted effort to identify, engage with, and involve all relevant local agencies and stakeholders since the inception of the IRWM Program. Indeed,



outreach to regional stakeholders, be they public agencies, private business, NGOs, water systems, disadvantaged communities, or tribes, has a high priority of the IRWM Program. The RWMG believes strongly that through coordination among local agencies, interested stakeholders, and adjacent IRWM regions, efficient use of resources can be achieved, redundant actions can be reduced, and opportunities for cooperative and integrated projects can be identified.

Coordination of Water Management Activities within Region

The strength of any IRWM planning effort lies in the degree to which involved parties engage and coordinate with one another. Understanding this fundamental concept, the Inyo-Mono RWMG has worked hard to create a forum for local project proponents and stakeholders to coordinate with one another on relevant water-related activities and efforts. The result is a broad and encompassing stakeholder group that meets regularly and works together to avoid conflicts and maximize efficiencies. Those entities involved represent interests ranging from federal, state, and local government; resource and water agencies; non-profit and conservation organizations; American Indian tribal organizations; educational organizations; business interests; agriculture and ranching groups; and individuals having vested interests in how water is managed in eastern California (see more on the composition of the RWMG in Chapter 5). In addition to those entities that are RWMG Members and/or regularly participate in the planning

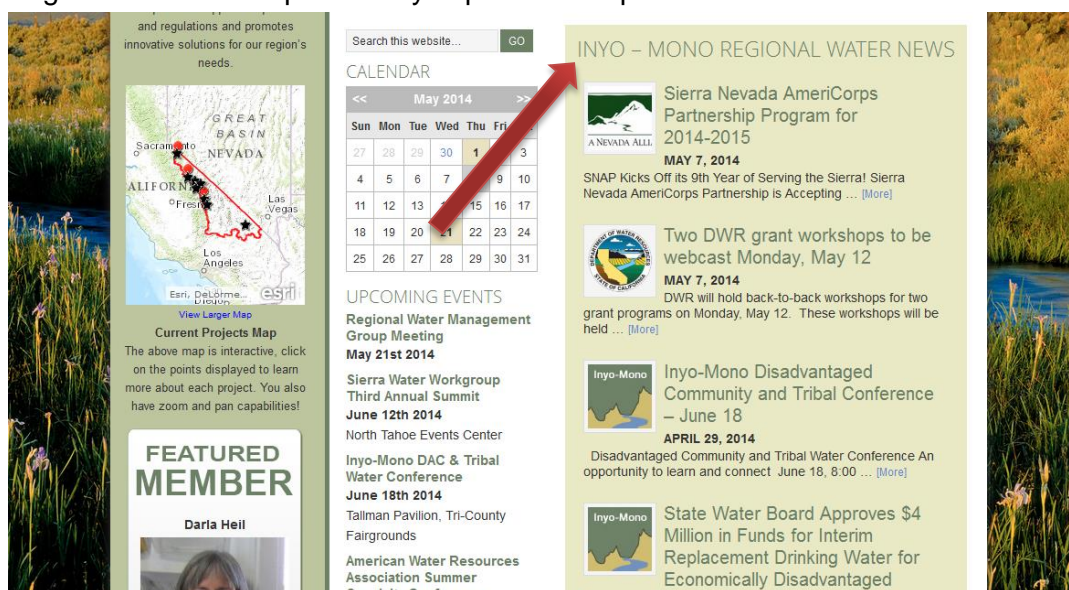
process, there is a large number of organizations and individuals who are on the Inyo-Mono RWMG contact list and regularly receive updates and notices of meetings. Some of these entities have been regular participants in the past but do not currently participate at a high level. The contact list, however, provides opportunity for coordination and collaboration through the regular communications that are distributed from the Program Office. In total, more than 200 people are included in the Inyo-Mono contact list, representing 106 organizations (see Chapter 1).

To keep all interested parties informed of the IRWM effort and recent developments, a variety of communication tools are used. Notices and agendas for upcoming RWMG meetings are sent to all people on the email contact list, as are meeting summaries and any other relevant information about the Inyo-Mono IRWM process or issues related to water planning and management in the region. In addition, Program Office staff is available by phone and by email for questions and information requests. When warranted, staff will travel within the region, or to Sacramento, to meet with stakeholders, members of the public, and DWR officials. The program website (www.inyo-monowater.org) has become an increasingly visible and important tool for sharing information with current Members and reaching out to new stakeholders. On this website, visitors can find topics such as introductory information about the Inyo-Mono IRWM Program, member organizations, meeting summaries and other important documents, and links to other IRWM Program websites. A particularly important component of the website are the news posts.

These bits of information help to communicate news and events to the RWMG and the public, are often related to entities outside of the Inyo-Mono IRWM region, and help to

communicate opportunities for creating alliances and collaboration. Despite problematic Internet availability in some areas of the region, the Program Office regularly hears that email and the website are the best way to communicate information to stakeholders in the region.

One of the most tangible, yet unquantifiable, benefits of the Inyo-Mono IRWM process to date has resulted from the practice of gathering water-related stakeholders at meetings on an almost-monthly basis to discuss the group, its activities, and water issues. Many of the organizations sitting at the table have historically been at odds over water issues. While it is not expected, nor intended, that the RWMG will solve all water-related conflicts in the region, many



RWMG participants have acknowledged the advantages of increased communication and cooperation among adversaries and allies alike. The process has helped to educate stakeholders about each other's activities, priorities and challenges. For instance, smaller water districts have sought advice from larger water districts on technical issues. Less experienced communities benefit by learning from groups with more experience in water management, and in turn, RWMG stakeholders have begun to understand the difficulties of maintaining high-quality water resources and ensuring ecosystem protection in small, rural communities and DACs. During the RWMG's visioning exercise in early 2010, several RWMG participants expressed the desire that the IRWM planning process should help individual stakeholders overcome conflict and should allow the group to speak with one voice and from common objectives.

There are two tangible examples of how coordination of water management activities has increased in the region thanks to the IRWM Program. The first example involves a small mobile home park in northern Mono County whose groundwater source is out of compliance for arsenic (the water source is also hot). The homeowners' association has consulted with two other small water systems in the region, one of which also has arsenic compliance issues, to learn how these water systems have approached issues with regulations, staffing, water testing, etc. The IRWMP facilitated first contact among these systems and stays in touch with the water managers on a regular basis.

The second example of coordination involves the Oak Creek watershed in central Inyo County. A 2007 fire in the watershed burned much of the vegetation, leaving the hillsides susceptible to erosion. A year later, a summer monsoon event caused a large flash flood and accompanying mudslide in the canyon, destroying homes and other structures. The Inyo National Forest, which manages much of the land in the Oak Creek watershed, is working with the Fort Independence Indian Reservation, which is on the downstream end of the canyon and experienced flooding on the reservation. Through an IRWM planning grant, the parties are working together to develop a restoration and management strategy for the watershed.



Identification and Coordination with Neighboring IRWM Regions

Inyo-Mono IRWM stakeholders have recognized the importance of understanding water management issues in neighboring IRWM regions and their relation to Inyo-Mono water issues. Understanding and appreciating the importance of coordination between the Inyo-Mono RWMG and neighboring RWMGs, the Inyo-Mono RWMG began reaching out to other efforts early on. Specifically, through the 2009 Region Acceptance Process, the Inyo-Mono RWMG identified all eastern California IRWM planning regions (see Figure 1-1 in Chapter 1) and held a series of meetings to ensure consistency in IRWM planning region boundary designations and to set the stage for potential coordination at the interregional scale. For example, the Inyo-Mono region overlaps with the Mojave IRWM planning region due to differences between the watershed boundary and a water agency jurisdictional boundary. As a result of this overlap, the two efforts have communicated during development and refinement of the respective IRWM Plans. In addition, the Inyo-Mono RWMG sought guidance from established IRWM groups in the development of its first planning grant application and the Phase I Plan.

As the Inyo-Mono IRWM Program developed, solid working relationships were established with several adjoining IRWM groups, including CABY, Tuolumne-Stanislaus, Tahoe-Sierra, Yosemite-Mariposa, Mojave, and Antelope Valley. The Inyo-Mono Program has also worked with several of the Sierra Nevada IRWM groups on issues of specific importance to the mountain range, such as water exports, economic development, and disadvantaged communities. There has also been a significant amount of coordination among the IRWM groups in the Lahontan Prop. 84 funding area. It is recognized among all of the groups that coordination on grant funding applications is a desired process, though to date no formal agreements have been developed among the Lahontan IRWM groups. These discussions will continue through the remaining Prop. 84 funding rounds and hopefully into future bond funding rounds should they materialize.

Although not a neighbor to the Greater Los Angeles IRWM Program by geographic standards, the Inyo-Mono planning region provides critical source water for the City of Los Angeles. Water exports from the Inyo-Mono region are a continued source of conflict between local water stakeholders and the City of Los Angeles. It is hoped that the IRWM effort can help “downstream” users establish a connection with their source water. Maintaining stewardship of water resources within the Inyo-Mono region has direct implications for the water quality and supply to millions of people in Los Angeles; stewardship of water resources should be of interest to both regions. Recognizing these mutual interests, Inyo-Mono Program Office staff has met with members of the Leadership Committee of the Greater Los Angeles IRWM Program in the hopes of developing inter-regional collaborations benefitting residents and resources of both regions. Though no tangible outcomes have resulted from these conversations thus far, Inyo-Mono staff and stakeholders will continue attempts to create a relationship with southern California water managers and users to foster understanding of source water regions and concerns.

Coordination and Involvement with Other Planning Efforts

Recognizing the importance of engaging with other water planning efforts within and adjacent to California, the Inyo-Mono IRWM Program has been part of several efforts both within and

outside of specific IRWM activities.

Sierra Water Work Group

The Sierra Water Workgroup (SWWG) is a coalition of 11 Sierra Nevada RWMGs that seeks to raise awareness of the importance of Sierra Nevada snowpack, watersheds, and communities to California's water resources. The mission of the group is to assist regional efforts to protect and enhance water quality, water supply, and watershed health; to develop cooperative regional responses; and to facilitate reinvestment in our watersheds and water resources by all beneficiaries. The Inyo-Mono IRWM Program was a founding member of the SWWG and has remained engaged as a member since its inception. Program Office staff and RWMG stakeholders participate in a leadership role in SWWG meetings and the newly-developed annual summit.

Roundtable of Regions

The Roundtable of Regions (RoR) is an ad-hoc group comprised of representatives from IRWM Programs throughout California. As with the SWWG, the RoR provides an opportunity for dialogue amongst IRWM Programs. However, unlike the SWWG, the geographic scope of the RoR is significantly broader, providing a greater opportunity to give input to, and gain knowledge from, other IRWM planning efforts. This group is a good source of information and input for both participating RWMGs and DWR, particularly when specific statewide initiatives, programs, or funding opportunities are launched. The Inyo-Mono Program Office is an active participant in the RoR and has been since its inception.

California Water Plan Update

The California Water Plan serves as an umbrella water planning document for the State. The Plan is revised every five years to reflect current trends, needs, and priorities related to water planning and provide the framework for policy development and funding priorities. Included in this planning is an emphasis on DWR's IRWM Program. Program Office staff was extensively involved in the Water Plan Update 2013 process, serving on the Public Advisory Committee and several topical caucuses (Finance, DAC, and Climate Change), as well as playing a leadership role in the development of the North and South Lahontan regional description chapters. Through its involvement, Program Office staff has provided a voice in Sacramento for high-priority water needs of the Inyo-Mono region, and, in turn, has acted as a liaison between state and regional planning entities by bringing information to the RWMG regarding state water planning activities.

Central Nevada Regional Water Authority

Inyo-Mono Program Office staff participates in annual Great Basin Water Forum meetings convened by the Central Nevada Regional Water Authority, a collaborative group comprised of stakeholders from central and northern Nevada, as well as Utah and three counties within California (including Inyo and Mono Counties). This group meets regularly to discuss water issues of concern in Nevada and bordering states. Because the Inyo-Mono region shares a border with Nevada and includes common watersheds, the RWMG recognizes the importance of understanding western Nevada water issues and establishing relationships with Nevada water stakeholders.

Coordination with Agencies and Agency Support

Recognizing the important role that both federal and State government agencies play in water resources management in the Inyo-Mono region, the RWMG has worked diligently to involve relevant agencies in the overall effort. A number of agencies, including California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. National Park Service, and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, regularly attend RWMG meetings. Given that more than 90% of the Inyo-Mono region's land area is comprised of public land, these government agencies are important partners in coordinating land and water planning for the region. Similarly, the Inyo-Mono RWMG has spent considerable time and effort cultivating its relationship with DWR. Staff at DWR provided helpful guidance and information during the development of the Inyo-Mono governance structure and planning process. DWR continues to be an essential partner in the Inyo-Mono IRWM process.

A key role for DWR is in facilitating connections among IRWM regions. DWR maintains contact information for each region and has access to the most up-to-date activities for each region. In addition, encouragement for coordination among regions from DWR carries weight with the regions. One example of such inter-regional communication being encouraged by DWR are the meetings that have taken place among the seven IRWM regions that received DAC outreach & engagement grants. While all of the regions agree that the communication and coordination that has taken place was beneficial, encouragement from DWR helped to ensure that these conference calls took place and were attended by all seven regions.

Given the rural nature of the Inyo-Mono region and the numerous disadvantaged communities, there is a preponderance of small yet critical water needs. These needs span the water supply, water quality and ecosystem stewardship scope, and many of these needs occur in small water systems supplying between 10 and 100 households. In addition to direct water-related needs, there is a paucity of technical, managerial and financial resources necessary to manage the small water systems that occur throughout the region. Funding is often difficult to come by as a result of challenging proposal requirements, high administrative costs, and prohibitive match funding requirements. The Inyo-Mono RWMG has attempted to address these needs at the State level by providing feedback to DWR about its grant requirements. The RWMG encourages more flexibility within the State's IRWM Program to be more responsive to the needs of small, rural communities. Furthermore, DWR is in a position to serve as an advocate for these small and disadvantaged communities with legislators, regulators, and policymakers.

Local, state, and federal agencies can and should do more to help the needs of small, rural, and disadvantaged communities and water systems. Such assistance would require a more coordinated approach among granting agencies and regulatory agencies to achieve better alignment between grant requirements and the actual needs and abilities of communities. Improved coordination of this type would provide greater opportunity to leverage multiple funding opportunities to meet match requirements and increase the scope of funding available to support local and regional needs. Similarly, state and federal grant programs could increase their outreach to stakeholders to improve awareness regarding what funding opportunities exist. For example, the California Financing Coordinating Committee conducts annual funding fairs that are open to the public, yet stakeholders living in small, rural areas often are not aware of

these fairs or of the opportunities they provide. Moreover, the fairs are almost always convened in more densely populated areas, requiring many hours of travel and often an overnight stay in order to attend. The Inyo-Mono RWMG encourages innovative solutions, such as a “finance extension” program where representatives from funding agencies travel throughout the state, engaging with communities to increase awareness of funding opportunities and building capacity to respond to such programs.

Similar to alignment among agencies with respect to grant funding, there could be better alignment among agencies regarding regulations and other requirements for planning and implementation efforts. Project sponsors must often follow rules of one or more local, state, and/or federal agencies when implementing projects. At times, these rules overlap or conflict. Improved coordination among agencies and with project sponsors could eliminate redundant efforts and inefficiencies.

The Inyo-Mono RWMG has always strived to maximize the opportunity to work and coordinate with stakeholders throughout the region, throughout the state, and even into neighboring Nevada. Although primarily focused on the Inyo-Mono region, the RWMG seeks to learn from and support other planning efforts in order to leverage one another’s experiences and positively impact a greater number of communities throughout the state of California. Fundamental to the success of the Inyo-Mono Program is a continued recognition of the importance to reach out to local, regional, and state-wide stakeholders representing public, private, tribal, and non-profit sectors. The Inyo-Mono IRWM Program will continue to reach out and coordinate with neighboring as well as other water-related planning efforts moving forward.